AJ Fleetcare crowned winner of The Motor Ombudsman’s 2024 National Garage Star Award

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Author:

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AJ Fleetcare is named the winner of the 2024 Garage Star Award for the North and the National trophy.

AJ Fleetcare is overall national winner of The Motor Ombudsman’s Star Awards.

The Motor Ombudsman tells us:

(All words and photographs from The Motor Ombudsman).

• AJ Fleetcare, a family-owned independent garage in Leeds, Yorkshire, has been crowned the overall national winner of The Motor Ombudsman's 2024 Star Awards, becoming the third independent garage to claim the sought-after National Garage Star Award since 2020

• Now in its fifth year, the annual competition was launched to recognise Motor Ombudsman-accredited businesses and staff members within these organisations who have gone the extra mile in the eyes of consumers

• The eight regional 2024 Garage Star trophy holders across the UK, include four individual winners from franchise car dealerships, and four independent garages

• In tandem with The Motor Ombudsman's partnership with the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)'s prestigious Hero Awards, the National Garage Star trophy will be formally presented at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster for the second year runningLondon, 26 November 2024

The Motor Ombudsman is pleased to announce that AJ Fleetcare, an independent garage in Leeds, has been crowned the 2024 winner of the National Garage Star Award – the top prize in the Ombudsman's annual Star Awards competition. Now in their fifth year, the motor industry accolades allow consumers to put businesses accredited to one or more of The Motor Ombudsman's four Codes of Practice, or individual staff members, into the spotlight, for going the extra mile to deliver an exceptional level of service. This can be at the point when customers buy a car, have it maintained, or during the process of making a purchase or a claim on a warranty.

The family-owned business in Yorkshire was amongst the 3,262 online nominations that were submitted by motorists up and down the UK in the latest contest – the highest ever volume of submissions received. These are short accounts from consumers, who put their 'stars' forward following acts of kindness and generosity, and highlight gestures that went beyond what would normally be expected of staff, and which ultimately made a significant difference.

According to pre-defined criteria, these entries were then whittled down by The Motor Ombudsman to form a shortlist of the final 30. These were made up of 24 nominations across eight UK regions for the Garage Star Awards – applicable to accredited independent garages and franchise dealers, and six nominations for the Customer Service Star Awards, covering vehicle manufacturers and extended warranty providers that are committed to The Motor Ombudsman's New Car and Vehicle Warranty Product Codes respectively.

These final contenders – an achievement in itself to reach this stage of the competition, were then passed to this year's Star Awards judging panel of industry experts to jointly determine the names of the winners for 2024, and the two highly commended entries in each category.

For the eight regional trophy holders that were named across the country in the Garage Star category, four were bestowed to individual team members from franchise car dealerships. The remainder were claimed by four independent garages, which saw Garej Arwyn Cyf in Wales win a Star Award for the second consecutive year. Furthermore, after seeing off stiff competition from the other two contenders earmarked for the regional Garage Star trophy for the North, AJ Fleetcare emerged triumphant, with judges commending the business for their caring and altruistic support of a customer who was facing challenging circumstances looking after a relative, which saw the garage fix the individual's vehicle at very short notice, whilst they also paid for a taxi fare at no extra charge to minimise inconvenience and keep the customer mobile. This was coupled with a thoughtful gift on the handover of the repaired vehicle, alongside words of reassurance.

To determine the name that would be etched on to this year's National Garage Star trophy, the independent garage from Leeds, alongside the seven other regional trophy holders, were then brought together once again for the final evaluation of the session to determine the recipient of the top prize. However, AJ Fleetcare's swift assistance of a consumer in their hour of need was considered, without hesitation by all judges, worthy of the coveted 2024 title, in addition to £2,000 in high street vouchers as a reflection of this outstanding achievement.

At the beginning of next month, the National Garage Star silverware will be formally presented for the second year running at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)'s Hero Awards ceremony in the prestigious surroundings of the Houses of Parliament. The annual celebration, attended by Members of Parliament, commemorates remarkable individuals or groups of people who have made outstanding contributions within their respective fields.

On being named the winner of the National Garage Star Award, Alan and Jeanette Landale, the husband and wife owners of AJ Fleetcare, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have won the top prize. We faced some very stiff competition from the other 2024 Garage Star Award winners, and bringing home two trophies is a true testament to the hard work that the entire team put in on a daily basis, and their unrelenting commitment to delivering the highest level of customer service across the business. This really is a joint effort, and we are honoured that the lengths that we go to, have been formally recognised both by our customers, and by a panel of motor industry experts. We are very much looking forward to a very memorable and special trip to London."

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director of The Motor Ombudsman, said: "We would like to congratulate all of this year's trophy winners and highly commended entries on their fantastic achievement, and AJ Fleetcare in particular, on claiming the highest honour, from the thousands of entries that we received. The calibre was extremely high, thereby making this a very closely fought contest. However, at the end of the day, it can be the smallest of gestures that make the biggest difference to someone, and AJ Fleetcare unanimously stood out for the judges, thanks to their unequivocal dedication to going the extra mile and taking all necessary steps to deliver a caring and attentive customer experience."

Bill added: "We would like to thank the customers of Motor Ombudsman-accredited businesses who took the time to nominate organisations and staff members across the UK. Without them and the hard work and kind-natured gestures shown by businesses, we would not have the great standard of entries and the industry awards that we have today."

DVSA's Head of Vehicle Policy and Engineering, Neil Barlow – a judge for the 2024 Star Awards, said: "Excellent customer service is a priority for DVSA, and for the wider industry. Providing a quality service builds trust with motorists and makes it easier for them to keep their vehicles safe. The 30 finalists in this year's Star Awards should be very proud of the great service they continue to offer customers. This year's winners AJ Fleetcare have proven their commitment to their customers, and in turn have set an example for the industry."

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman's Star Awards, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org/Awards.

2024 Garage Star Award winners and highly commended entries

The businesses and individuals crowned regional Garage Star Award winners in 2024, and those which were highly commended, were:

NORTH: AJ Fleetcare (Leeds, Yorkshire), for assisting a customer facing challenging personal circumstances, at very short notice, and with added care and empathy

Highly commended: Keswick Motor Company (Keswick, Cumbria) and Napoleon Garage (BD4) Ltd (Bradford, Yorkshire)

SOUTH: Courtwood Car Services (Uxbridge, Middlesex), for going to great lengths to bring a 20-year-old vehicle back to a roadworthy and legal condition, and for spending a significant amount of time diagnosing a mechanical issue

Highly commended: Bourne Road Garage Ltd (Dartford, Essex) and Nick Locke, CMA General Manager (for Chingford and Northampton) at Bristol Street Motors Vauxhall Chingford (East London)

EAST: Connor Smith, Sales Executive at Marshall Ford King'sLynn (King'sLynn,Norfolk), for an exceptional and very attentive level of service shown to a customer who had specific mobility requirements, during the purchase process, and post-sale

Highly commended: Crown Garage Honda (King's Lynn, Norfolk) and Wings SKODA Peterborough (Cambridgeshire)

WEST: Dominic Bryan, General Sales Manager at Marshall Hyundai Worcester (Worcestershire), for working after hours, and going beyond the call of duty to ensure the seamless purchase of a new car for a customer's elderly parents

Highly commended: AP Auto Repairs (Helston, Cornwall) and CM Motors (Helston, Cornwall)

THE MIDLANDS: Luke Saunders, Sales Executive at Listers Honda Stratford-upon-Avon (Warwickshire), for his thoughtful, kind and highly considerate approach shown to a customer throughout the purchase process, from handover, to delivery

Highly commended: Car and Commercial Repairs Ltd (Nottingham, Nottinghamshire) and Chris Jenks, Service Manager at R.C. Motors Ltd (Shrewsbury, Shropshire)

NORTHERN IRELAND: Lisa Gormley, Service Manager at Donnelly & Taggart Renault (Ballymena, County Antrim), for reassuring and caring service provided to a family, and for the swift repair of a vehicle that had broken down

Highly commended: Donnelly Honda Belfast (Belfast, County Antrim) and Roadside (Garages) Kia (Coleraine, County Londonderry)

SCOTLAND: Anderson Clark Motor Repairs (Inverness, Inverness-shire), for assisting a customer at short notice with repairs, for vehicles used for charitable commitments

Highly commended: Brown Brothers (Peebles, Peebleshire) and MacInnes Motors (Dingwall, Ross-Shire)

WALES: Garej Arwyn Cyf (Caernarfon,Gwynedd), for a courteous and personal approach shown to a customer, whilst offering a consistently high level of service.

Highly commended: Jamin Strickland at Cardiff Honda (Glamorgan) and Ponthir Group Newport (Gwent)

National Garage Star Award winners – Hall of Fame

2024: AJ Fleetcare, Leeds, Yorkshire (independent garage)

2023: Luke Laurence, Sales Executive at Crown Suzuki, Hendon, North London (individual team member)

2022: Roadside (Garages) Kia, Coleraine, Northern Ireland (franchise car dealership)

2021: The Garage (Whitburn), Whitburn, Scotland (independent garage)

2020: Dukes AutoTech, St Austell, Cornwall (independent garage)

Judging panel for The Motor Ombudsman's 2024 Star Awards

Bill Fennell: Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director, The Motor Ombudsman (Host Judge)

Neil Barlow: Head of Vehicle Policy and Engineering, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Gavin Braithwaite-Smith: Features Editor, Garage Wire

About The Motor Ombudsman

The Motor Ombudsman is the independent and impartial Ombudsman dedicated solely to the automotive sector, and self-regulates the UK's motor industry through its comprehensive Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)-approved Codes of Practice. Thousands of businesses, including vehicle manufacturers, warranty product providers, franchised dealers and independent garages, are accredited to one or more of the Codes, which drive even higher standards of work and service, and give consumers added protection, peace of mind and trust during the vehicle purchase and ownership experience.

For more information on The Motor Ombudsman, visit www.TheMotorOmbudsman.org.